

Dawnna Dukes

Biography

Dawnna Dukes is a ninth term member of the Texas House of Representatives and a third generation native of District 46, which comprises inner-city East Austin and Northeast Travis County. Representative Dukes currently serves as a respected member of the Appropriations Committee, Vice Chair of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee on Appropriations, as well as a member of the Culture, Recreation and Tourism Committee. In addition, she has served as Chair of the Special Issues Committee on Appropriations, Vice Chair of the Committee on Ethics and as a member of the Stimulus Subcommittee on Appropriations, Joint Task Force on the Use of Sales Tax on Sporting Goods, the Medicaid Reform Legislative Oversight Committee, the Business and Industry Committee and the Environmental Regulation Committee.

Representative Dukes has traveled extensively as an ambassador for the State of Texas and the United States. In 1995, Dukes was one of eight legislators chosen from the United States to be part of the 1995 American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) delegation to Taiwan. She was also selected by ACYPL and an ancillary group, the Atlantic Association of Young Political Leaders (AAYPL), to represent the United States in a conference on the future of NATO in the 21st century with Canadian and European counterparts in Brussels, Belgium. During her second term, Dukes was among four individuals nationwide to be selected by the Japan Society to become a 1997 Local Public Policy Fellow. For two months, Dukes traveled through Japan to research and write about women-owned business, and race and gender relations in Japan.

Due to her consistent crusade for the equality of all people, she was named the 1999 Outstanding Human Rights Advocate by the Human Rights Campaign. In 2002, Representative Dukes was presented with the YWCA Woman of the Year award for her dedication and work in public policy and government services. Also for her work in public servitude, she received the 2010 Distinguished Public Service Award by the National Foundation of Black Public Administrators. In recognition of her advocacy for youth of all ages, Representative Dukes was named the 2010 Texan of the Year by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Texas.

Representative Dukes is a graduate of Texas A&M University with a B.S. in Psychology. She is the owner of DM Dukes and Associates, Inc., a consulting firm; a member of the Links, Inc.-Austin Chapter and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.-Beta Psi Omega Graduate Chapter.

EDUCATION

As an active member of the Texas House of Representatives, Representative Dukes has led the fight to improve public and higher education by requiring school districts to inform parents of uncertified instructors teaching in the classroom; advocating for increases in funding for early childhood education; and promoting dropout prevention programs, as well as an across the board pay raise for every full-time teacher, counselor, and school nurse. Representative Dukes has been instrumental in the fight to keep low-performing neighborhood schools open and ensuring they are provided with the necessary tools to succeed. She has also fought to make college more accessible to low income students by co-sponsoring the 100 million dollar TEXAS Grant Program and co-authoring legislation to establish the Texas Tomorrow Fund II.

PUBLIC SAFETY

In her commitment to increase school safety and build safer communities, Representative Dukes

created tougher penalties against gang recruitment and activity, expanded the "gun free school zones" provision, and protected a child's right to due process under the law by requiring that proper counsel be provided to youth during law enforcement interrogations. Representative Dukes expanded unemployment compensation to allow victims of domestic abuse to have an independent source of income. She also strengthened protective orders to ensure that victims of child, spousal, adult and elder abuse receive greater protection. She sought to improve the rights of minors by providing them with access to emergency shelters in order to protect their physical health and safety. Representative Dukes passed land mark legislation to prevent teen dating violence, requiring all school districts in Texas to include a teen dating violence identification and education program into their campus safety programs.

APPROPRIATIONS

Since 2003 Representative Dukes has been an active member of the powerful Appropriations Committee. She was instrumental in securing \$182 million for the preservation of state parks as the Chair of Budget and Oversight of the Culture, Recreation and Tourism Committee. As Chair of the subcommittee on Specials Issues, Representative Dukes engineered a \$500 million across the board pay raise for all state employees and targeted pay raises for public safety employees. She also provided \$200 million from the System Benefit Fund for a 10% electricity rate discount for low income Texans.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

In her veteran position on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, Representative Dukes has become a chief architect in crafting agency budgets and influencing policy within health and human services. She has preserved funding to ensure that aging Texans and persons with disabilities would continue to receive vital health care services and their long-term care needs would be met. In her efforts to provide women and children with access to preventative health care, she created the Women's Health Program, which provides family planning services to low income women. Representative Dukes has reduced barriers and expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program with an additional \$90 million, and has worked to make certain children have access to care by increasing physician reimbursement rates and providing strategic medical and dental initiatives. She has provided critical funding for community crisis programs and expanded transitional and intensive on-going community mental health services.

Representative Dukes has been especially active in reforming Child Protective Services and providing the resources needed to keep children safe and preserve families. She passed legislation to provide assistance payments to kinship providers who care for loved ones that would otherwise be in the state's foster care system. Representative Dukes has extended adoption assistance and foster care to youth up to age twenty one. Additionally, she has provided funding and support for prevention programs for youth at risk of abuse and neglect. Her steadfast commitment to protect children and strengthen families earned Representative Dukes the TexProtects Children's Champion Award in 2009.

ENVIRONMENT

Representative Dukes has systematically challenged state leadership to address environmental racism by preventing the development of undesirable industry in neighborhoods, has worked to reduce air pollution from Texas industries, and has strengthened State oversight of municipal landfills. Due to her innovative guidance and strong efforts to protect the environment, the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club presented Representative Dukes with the "New Leadership for the

Environment" award in 1995.

HOUSING/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In her commitment to ensure access to affordable housing, Representative Dukes joint authored the creation of a homestead preservation district in Austin. It grants cities the tools to help increase home ownership, provide affordable housing, and prevent the involuntary loss of homesteads by existing low-income and moderate-income homeowners living in neighborhoods experiencing rising property values, such as in Central East Austin.

In 1999, Representative Dukes engineered comprehensive legislation to improve the State's Historically Underutilized Business program that leveled the playing field for women and minority-owned businesses in the competition for and the awarding of state contracts. She received national recognition for her legislative efforts to promote the increased participation of women and minority-owned businesses in Texas by being named State Legislator of the Year by the National Association of Small Disadvantaged Businesses.

In her effort to create jobs and stimulate the economy, Representative Dukes created the Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program and secured \$60 million for incentives to bring Texas into the forefront of the competitive film industry. Her vigilant work on film incentives and other community work earned her the 2010 Distinguished Boyd Vance Award honored and an award at the 2010 Texas Black Film Festival Award in Dallas.

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